

NATIONAL TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY.

[45a.]

DEPARTMENT OF RAILWAYS AND CANALS.

OTTAWA, March 1, 1906.

The Hon. H. R. EMMERSON,
Minister of Railways and Canals,
Ottawa.

SIR,—It appears to me the time has arrived when it is important you should be informed of the progress being made with the surveys and works of construction upon the western division of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (Winnipeg to the Pacific coast).

The position at this date, March 1, 1906, is as follows:—

1st. From Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie, a distance of about fifty-eight miles, the route map has been submitted and approved, and the location surveys are in progress.

2nd. From Portage la Prairie to the Touchwood Hills, a distance of about 275 miles, the route map has been submitted and approved and the location has been made, but only 258 miles of the location plans and profiles have been submitted and approved. The works of construction upon this 258 miles are under contract with Messrs. McDonald, McMillan & Co., who have commenced operations, having graded about 50 miles of road and built a few culverts. They are organizing for a vigorous prosecution of the work upon the opening of the spring season.

3rd. From the Touchwood Hills to Edmonton, a distance of about 490 miles, the company have filed a route map, but inasmuch as the line shown crosses the Saskatchewan river about twelve miles east of Edmonton, at Clover Hill Bar, the government have withheld their approval of the first forty-five miles east from Edmonton, it being their desire that the line should pass through Strathcona, crossing the Saskatchewan at that point, and so into Edmonton, if as favourable a line can be obtained on that route as by Clover Hill Bar. With a view to ascertaining whether as feasible a line can be had by crossing the river at Strathcona as by Clover Hill Bar, you ordered a resurvey to be made of this section of country, which survey is now being carried on, but the company inform me they will not be able to submit the results until towards the end of March, instant. In the meantime the location surveys have been in progress to within forty-five miles of Edmonton, and the company inform me that the plans and profiles are being prepared, and will shortly be forwarded for approval. The

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plans and profiles of the first fifty miles from Touchwood Hills have come to hand, but, at the request of the company, no action is being taken on them until the balance are finished.

4th. From Edmonton to the western end of the prairie section preliminary surveys have been made, but no route map has yet been submitted for approval, as until it has been determined which pass through the Rocky Mountains is to be adopted, it is not possible to show a route for this portion of the road.

5th. From the western end of the prairie section to the Pacific coast explorations of several of the mountain passes have been made, but sufficient information has not yet been obtained to enable decision to be reached on so important a question as that of the selection of the pass through which the railway should be built.

The difficulties of examination and comparison of passes in a mountainous country such as that to be traversed in the present case are of the gravest character, and the responsibility of selection, upon the judiciousness of which the economical success of the railway will depend, demands the closest study and the fullest data. The company would be unwise to come to any conclusion pending as complete information as can be obtained on the subject, and this they are now actively gathering by their present explorations.

COLLINGWOOD SCHREIBER,

Government Chief Engineer of the Western Division of
the National Transcontinental Railway.